

**DRAFT**

**REUSE OF INDUSTRIAL LANDS CASE STUDY:**

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**P A R A M O U N T**

## PARAMOUNT

### INDUSTRIAL LAND REUSE

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Teh Gateway City of Paramount.

The following *Livable Communities* case study focuses on the redevelopment of underutilized industrial land to achieve a city structure based on a series of walkable, mixed-use districts serving local residents. In addition, the case study addresses how to link these districts through the use of public transit and streetscape design.

Like many other cities in the GCCOG, Paramount is experiencing a transition of demand from industrial to other (in particular residential) uses. Currently, this transition is happening in a haphazard manner, with residential uses appearing piecemeal in areas zoned for industrial. This pattern of transition is resulting in the disintegration of the City's structure. Planning efforts to guide the transition of districts should strive to create developments capable of maximizing their commercial value. The case study describes how that transition can be directed and focused to create a clear structure of city districts capable of attracting a larger share of regional investment.

### BROWNFIELDS IN THE GATEWAY CITIES REGION

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Brownfields are defined as vacant or underutilized land parcels that are more difficult to redevelop due to either a real or perceived threat of toxic contamination. The GCCOG has highlighted the proliferation of brownfields as a genuine concern related to development and has identified 1200 brownfield sites in the region. Currently, the GCCOG is sponsoring a *Brownfield Pilot Program* to establish methods of streamlining the redevelopment of these sites. The pilot program will seek to identify new technology for toxic remediation and to establish models for redeveloping contaminated industrial sites in the region. Every brownfield site presents a unique set of challenges with regard to location, contamination type, land use demands and investment potential. Nonetheless, the pilot program will serve as a resource to educate municipal governments and developers as to how to transform brownfield sites in the GCCOG region from costly liabilities into valuable assets.



*Brownfield site in the City of Paramount.*

Within its City limits, the City of Paramount has identified several brownfield sites. The recommendations that follow demonstrate the incorporation of two existing brownfield sites into a city-wide district revitalization plan. The Cerro Metals Corporation and the Brownyard Steel Company currently occupy these sites. The potential for implementing various redevelopment scenarios on these is dependent upon the type of contamination present and the degree of cleanup needed to implement the proposed land uses. The details of toxic remediation techniques and investment potential related to the individual sites will not be addressed in this case study. The feasibility of any redevelopment, however, is limited only by the innovation and sophistication of the approach used to achieve the goals of remediation and revitalization.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS



*Paramount's pattern of Street and Blocks*



*Pocket park in Paramount.*

Paramount is a city of approximately 52,000 located in the heart of Los Angeles County. With excellent access to three major highways, the Union Pacific rail corridor, and the Alameda Corridor railway, the City has been able to build a strong local economy based on industrial activities.

The current land use distribution is illustrative of the City's orientation with regard to the Alameda Corridor. The industrial and commercial zone is centered between Paramount Boulevard and Garfield Avenue and stretches from the southern border of the City, north to Union Pacific Railway corridor. Garfield Avenue, running north-south along the western edge of the commercial/industrial area, serves as the primary industrial thoroughfare providing access to the Long Beach Freeway and Interstate 105.

Paramount Boulevard serves as the primary commercial thoroughfare in the City. In addition to providing access to the major highways and civic buildings, the boulevard is flanked with strip-mall style retail and services. The City has designated the intersection of Paramount Boulevard and Alondra Boulevard as the heart of the Central Business District (CBD). From this intersection, commercial development expands westward toward the City of Compton, and east toward Lakewood Boulevard. South of Alondra Boulevard, several community-oriented retail shops are clustered near Jackson Street, which provides access to the civic center. To the north, Paramount Boulevard becomes an automobile oriented commercial strip with few walkable areas. This zone is dominated by areas of inconsistent building frontage, with large parking lots which separate the retail environment from the public space of the street corridor. In addition to retail and commercial centers, Paramount Boulevard features the high school, several "pocket parks" and other points of interest, further emphasizing its role as the primary civic thoroughfare.



----- City Border

## City of Paramount - Orientation Map

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*Ficus trees line Paramount's sidewalks.*



*Improvements to Paramount's residential neighborhoods.*



*Downtown streetscape improvements.*

## *City Initiatives*

The City of Paramount has been pro-active in its attempts to create livability. The Paramount Redevelopment Agency has adopted policies intended to guide future development as well as to reduce the effectual spread of "blight and deterioration". The most recent amendment to the *Redevelopment Plan*, however, was made 20 years ago, and needs to be updated to make the most of current opportunities.

In recent years, the City has enacted several programs to enhance its appeal to potential investors. The implementation of Paramount's current Streetscape Improvement Program has resulted in changes such as the planting of street trees, improved sidewalks and promotional banners. At the neighborhood scale, the *Residential Rehabilitation Program* and the *White Picket Fence Program* offer effective incentives to homeowners to beautify their residences. Capital improvements such as the construction of public fountains and the installation of public sculptures have enhanced the pedestrian environment and the City's overall appearance. Similarly, the City has teamed up with property owners to implement a "pocket park" program that converts otherwise vacant parcels into appealing green spaces. The success of these programs has resulted in Paramount's reputation in the region as a picturesque city.

The City of Paramount has made extensive efforts to attract new business by minimizing much of the "bureaucratic hassle" often associated with establishing new enterprise. There are over 300 members of the City's Chamber of Commerce representing a wide variety of business types from manufacturing to retail.

The *Paramount General Plan* makes specific recommendations with regard to the constraints and opportunities throughout the City. The guidelines are intended to establish a means of allowing Paramount to flourish as a pro-business industrial engine while maintaining attractive residential neighborhoods with easy access to shopping and entertainment.



Residential alley in Paramount.

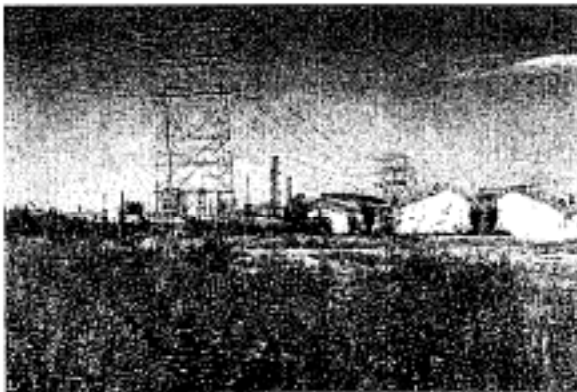
## Urban Design Context

Paramount's transformation from the two small farming communities of Clearwater and Hynes to a single unified city balancing residential, commercial and industrial developments, has been a rapid one. The Paramount General Plan describes how the "dairies began developing one by one to industrial or residential use, often with little attention paid to the relationship between neighboring parcels, the circulation system, and the overall balance of land uses in the City."

The result of this unplanned, privately executed investment is a hodge podge of commercial, industrial, and residential land uses with no district or neighborhood structure, a lack of walkable street corridors, an inconsistent public realm, and no clearly identifiable "heart of the city".

The City has identified "Land Use Compatibility" as one of its primary concerns with regard to the "Goals and Objectives" *Paramount General Plan*. While established residential areas exist to the east of Paramount Boulevard and to the west of Garfield Avenue, there are a significant number of residential developments (primarily single family detached houses) within the land use area zoned as the *Central Industrial District*. This haphazard distribution of land uses is indicative of the changing real estate demands in the City and the region.

Paramount's street pattern is interrupted in many locations by barriers including rail corridors and utility easements that currently inhibit movement and detract from district connectivity. Specifically these include the Union Pacific Railway corridors and the utility easement located west of Garfield Avenue. Many blank walls and vacant parcels front Paramount Boulevard, creating an unfriendly pedestrian environment. Deep building setbacks and expansive parking lots discourage pedestrian activity within the commercial centers. While there is evidence of major street corridor improvement, particularly at the intersection of Somerset and Paramount, the character of the street environment along Paramount Boulevard lacks consistency. Large "superblock" parcels in the industrial districts reduce connectivity and legibility of the City's structure, particularly in the area bound by Garfield Avenue, Paramount Boulevard, Rosecrans Avenue, and Somerset Boulevard.



Utility corridor.

# DRAFT

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### Paramount Boulevard

Commercial Business District (CBD) at intersection with Alondra

New police station shows growing civic presence in the area

Swap meet, movie theater and area near the high school serve as gathering spaces

Large underdeveloped blocks provide opportunity to create new city fabric.

### Harfield Avenue

Major north/south truck route, provides access to I-105

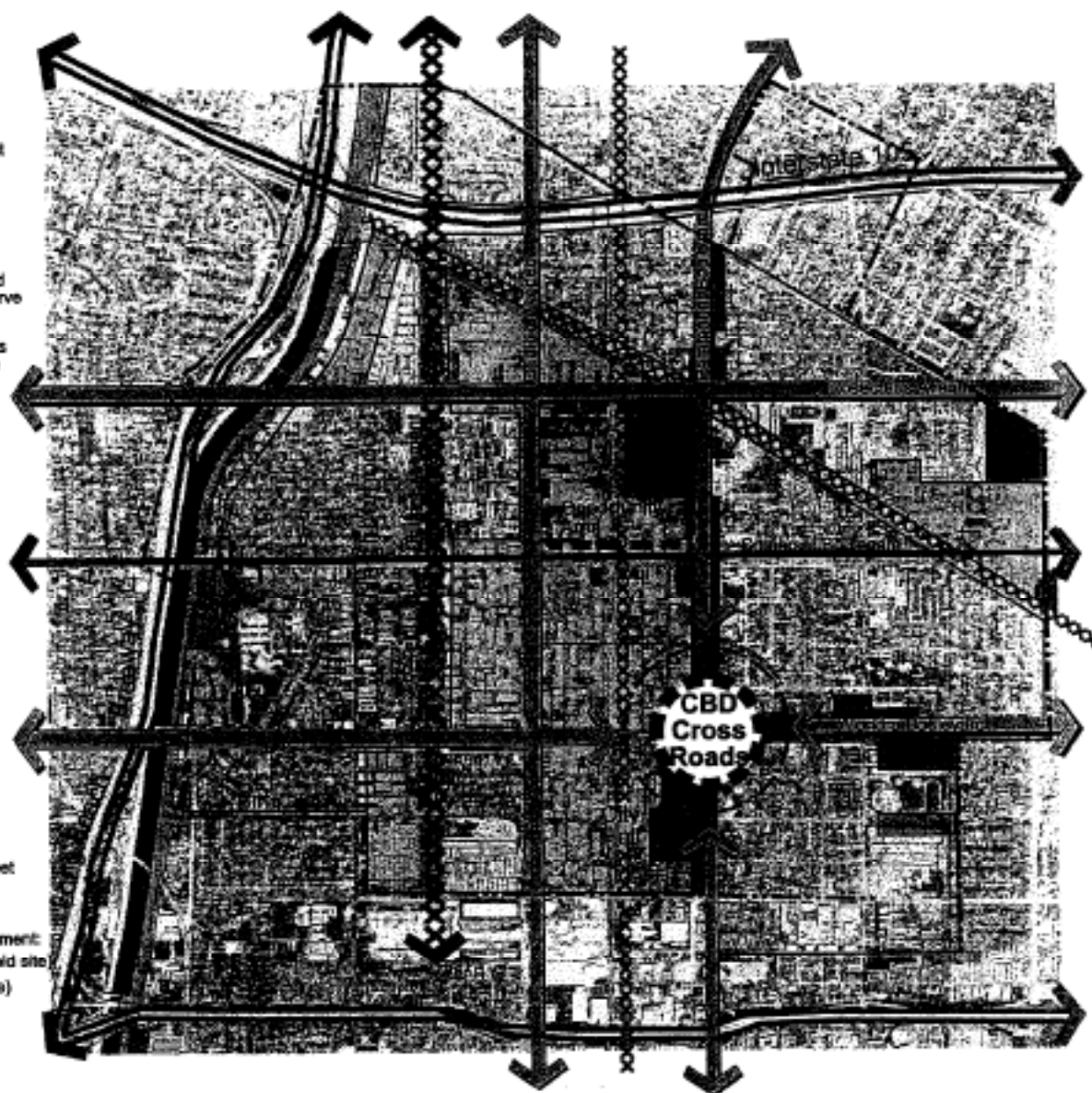
Intersection with Rosecrans provides access to Long Beach Freeway.

### Opportunity Areas

Central location of Swap Meet is well-suited to function as new district center for city.

Other sites for redevelopment:

- Cerro Metals (brownfield site)
- Brownyard (brownfield site)



### Legend

- Thoroughfares (primarily auto-oriented)
- Roadway (primarily auto-oriented)
- Freeways provide regional access on three sides of the city
- River establishes western edge of residential neighborhoods



Anchor/Activity Center



Rail corridor acts as barrier to reduce connectivity and cohesiveness of urban fabric



City Boundary

## Urban Design Context

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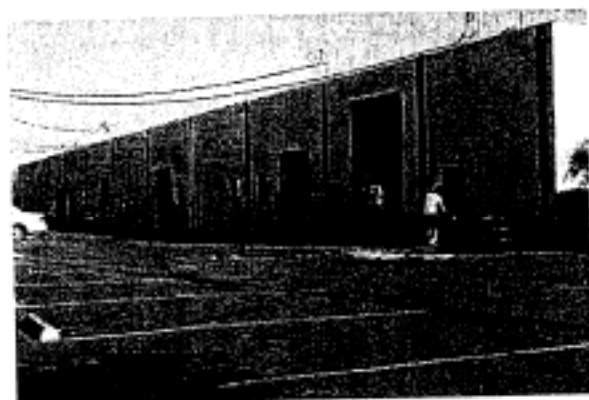


*Paramount Swap Meet.*

## *Opportunity Areas*

Whereas much of the land in the center of Paramount will be returned for industrial usage, there are a variety of areas undergoing change, and transitioning away from their industrial focus. These areas represent opportunities to re-focus the land uses and characters of new development. Reconfiguration of these areas can create new parcels that are highly desirable to investors, and that will contribute to the City's livability.

South of the intersection of Rosecrans Avenue and Paramount Boulevard, directly across from the high school, is the Paramount Swap Meet. Formerly a drive-in movie theater, this site serves as a regional swap meet, drawing a significant number of regional residents to the site on a daily basis. New investment in this area includes a multiplex movie theater on Rosecrans Avenue as well as a retail center on the corner of Rosecrans Avenue and Paramount Boulevard. With a new food court currently under construction adjacent to the movie theater, this area is becoming one of the primary entertainment hubs in the City. The high school and its adjoining open space also serves as a gathering point for the community.



*Industrial warehouse complex.*

The intersection of Alondra Boulevard and Paramount Boulevard is the geographical center of the City's Commercial Business District (CBD). The most recent addition to Paramount's redevelopment area, the CBD is considered an integral part of the overall cohesiveness of the City, and much of the redevelopment accomplished in Paramount has been at or adjacent to this intersection. The nearby City Hall and new police station add to the community uses in the area. This area, however, has not been developed in a way that makes it immediately identifiable as a city center, and it lacks the vitality typically associated with a successful CBD.

New home construction in the City has been low, and the number of housing permits, although rising, is still lower than it was 10 years ago. A lack of vacant land zoned for residential use limits the amount of single family housing construction, making it difficult to respond to existing demands in the market. Interviews with city officials indicated that there is an untapped market for multi-family housing to accommodate the City's growing population.

Despite the shift in the type of industry and manufacturing experienced by the cities of Southern California, industrial land uses remain a strong component of Paramount's urban and economic fabric. Growth in the high-tech industry is unlikely at this time; however, there is continuing demand for warehouse and distribution services to support the region's port activities. Because of high-use transportation routes like Garfield Avenue and easy access to Interstate 105, transportation, storage and delivery will remain in demand as a land use in Paramount's Industrial District.

## URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

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- *Identify and clarify existing districts in the City with regard to their function and land use.*
- *Direct and organize land use transitions within an overall master plan for creating integrated urban districts and nodes.*

In order to facilitate the deliberate transition of formerly industrial areas to new highly valued portions of the city, where both business and residential activity can thrive, land uses must be grouped in compatible clusters that establish clear district character and identity. As noted above, the haphazard transition of industrial lands to other uses has resulted in incompatible adjacent land uses occurring in areas where neither a fully residential nor industrial district character is apparent. As a result, the individual parcels are not well matched to their particular surrounding, as they would be if they were integrated into the internal organization of a district with a clearly defined character. Furthermore, this lack of clear district character interferes with the City's ability to serve those districts with an infrastructure plan that best serves the individual land uses. For example, streetscape improvements appropriate for a residential area may not be the same type of improvements best applied to a district dominated by industrial uses. Well-integrated districts create a framework for the city to optimize its use of resources and best serve its citizens.

The City of Paramount should establish a system of city districts, each with a clearly defined character that determines the district's components and organization. This system of districts should be integrated with a hierarchy of city streets that supports the functions of those districts both internally and externally. In turn, the organization of this hierarchy of city streets should be in part determined by existing connections to the regional transportation system.

Within the individual districts there should be a clear organization based on the predominant land use and development types in the district. Districts that primarily serve industrial functions should be located along the City's truck routes and have an internal structure that allows for easy truck access. "Buffer" land uses, such as warehouse and distribution, should be located along the edges of districts and along primary transportation truck routes. Non-industrial uses should be protected and located away from traffic and heavy industry.

## City Districts

- Define and refine existing districts according to their character and use.
- Industrial uses should be structured to strengthen urban fabric while maintaining function.
- Create distinct residential areas buffered from industrial uses.

## District Connections

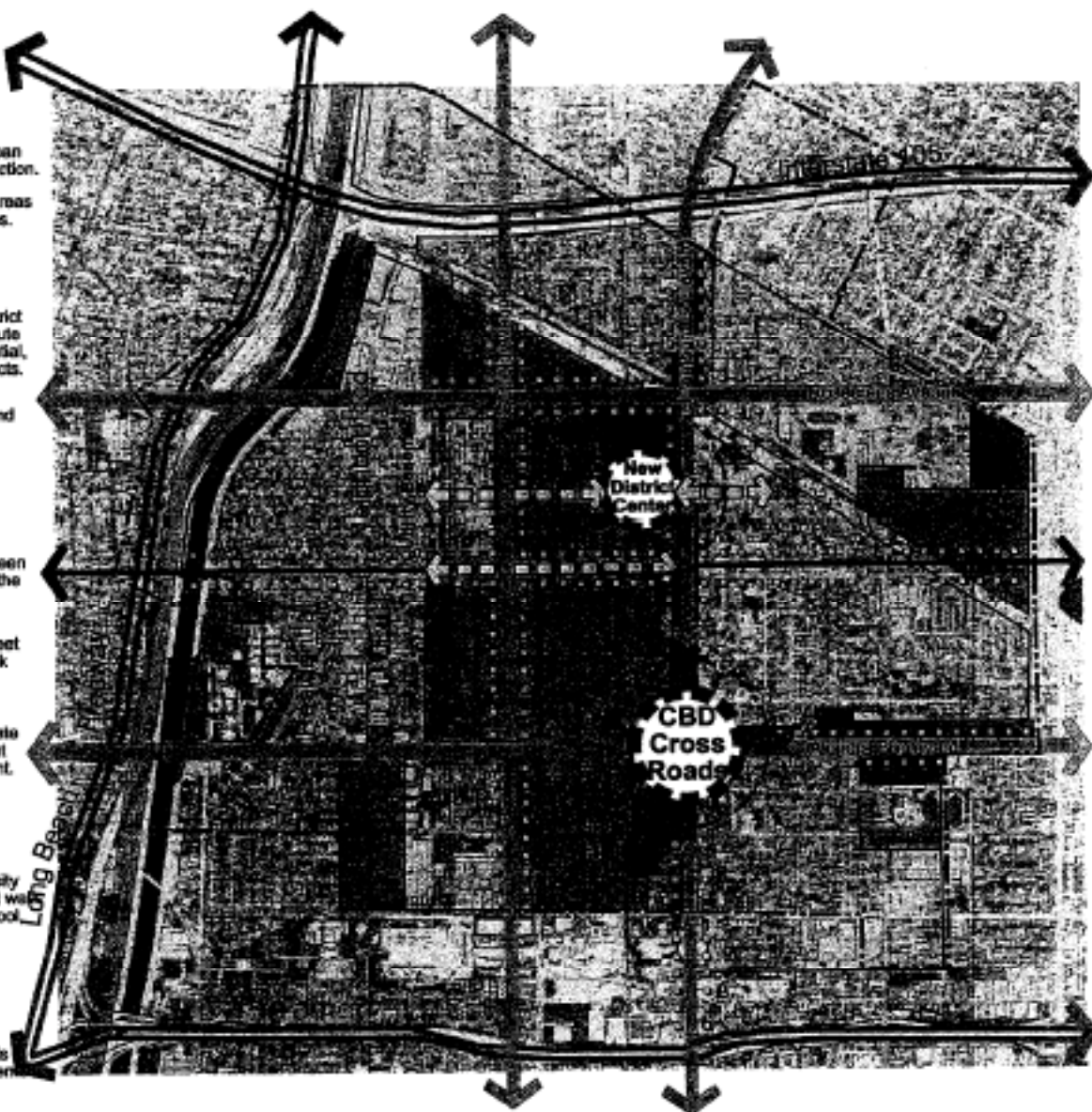
- Improve transit hubs at district nodes to gather and distribute pedestrians among residential, commercial and retail districts.
- Break down "superblocks" with smaller block series and pedestrian-oriented thoroughfares.

## Streetscape Enhancements

- 1 Encourage walkability between neighborhood districts and the CBD / New District Center
- 2 Continue streetscape improvements including street trees, medians and sidewalk improvements to enhance pedestrian experience.
- 3 Reinforce connections, create paths and look to implement transit-oriented development.

## New District Center

- 1 District provides high density retail activity within a short walk of movie theater, high school, and open green space.
- 2 Civic gathering space: public art, theater, music
- 3 Temporary retail such as coffee carts and newsstands activate the new activity center



## Legend

- Thoroughfares (primarily auto-oriented)
- Roadway (primarily auto-oriented)
- Freeways provide regional access on three sides of the city
- River establishes western edge of residential neighborhoods



Anchor/Activity Center

Barrier reduces connectivity and cohesiveness of urban fabric

City Boundary

# Urban Design Recommendations

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## TRANSIT-ORIENTED REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- *Redefine existing land uses and zoning to encourage the development of a pedestrian and transit-oriented urban environment, based on commercial and neighborhood districts, having well defined centers and edges.*
- *Enhance the existing transit system via the establishment of retail and civic transit nodes throughout the city.*

A successful local transit system is crucial to the revitalization of a pedestrian-oriented downtown; it serves to deliver people to vital city centers and reduces the amount of traffic and parking associated with both commercial and retail centers. Similarly, properly planned transit centers can accentuate the civic structure, add variety to the public realm, and enhance overall livability. Lastly, a strong local transit system is the first step towards the realization of successful regional transit. Land use transformation of the urban fabric would be supported by the expansion of the transportation system, both regionally and locally, into a more effective means of moving people among the districts and nodes within the city.

Paramount currently has concentrations of land uses that have the potential to serve as transit centers. Existing demand for the development of industrial, commercial, and residential land use can be harnessed to support transit-oriented neighborhood districts. Redevelopment activity should be organized to create a network of linked transit "nodes" with each node functioning as the center of new or enhanced neighborhoods, and as a stimulator for residential infill outward from each center. Development at these neighborhood transit nodes should include a high concentration of uses, clustering retail development and its associated activity to support civic open spaces for community interaction (as well as transit access). Recommended locations for these hubs include the central business district at the intersection of Alondra and Paramount Boulevard and the intersection of Somerset Boulevard and Orange Avenue, as well as in the New District Center between Rosecrans and Somerset on Paramount Boulevard.



*Paramount's transit system.*

## districts

Central Business District, at the intersection of Alondra Boulevard and Paramount Boulevard.

- Commercial and retail center
- Proximity to Civic Center
- Transit hub for city commerce

"New Town Center" located on the site of the former "swap meet".

- Public gathering space
- Swap Meet
- Transit Hub
- Central to highschool, established retail and movie theater, Somerset Business Park, and residential development
- First phase in city-wide revitalization plan

Residential Node at intersection of Somerset Boulevard and Orange Avenue.

- Transit Hub
- Development of walkable cluster
- Local community gathering space

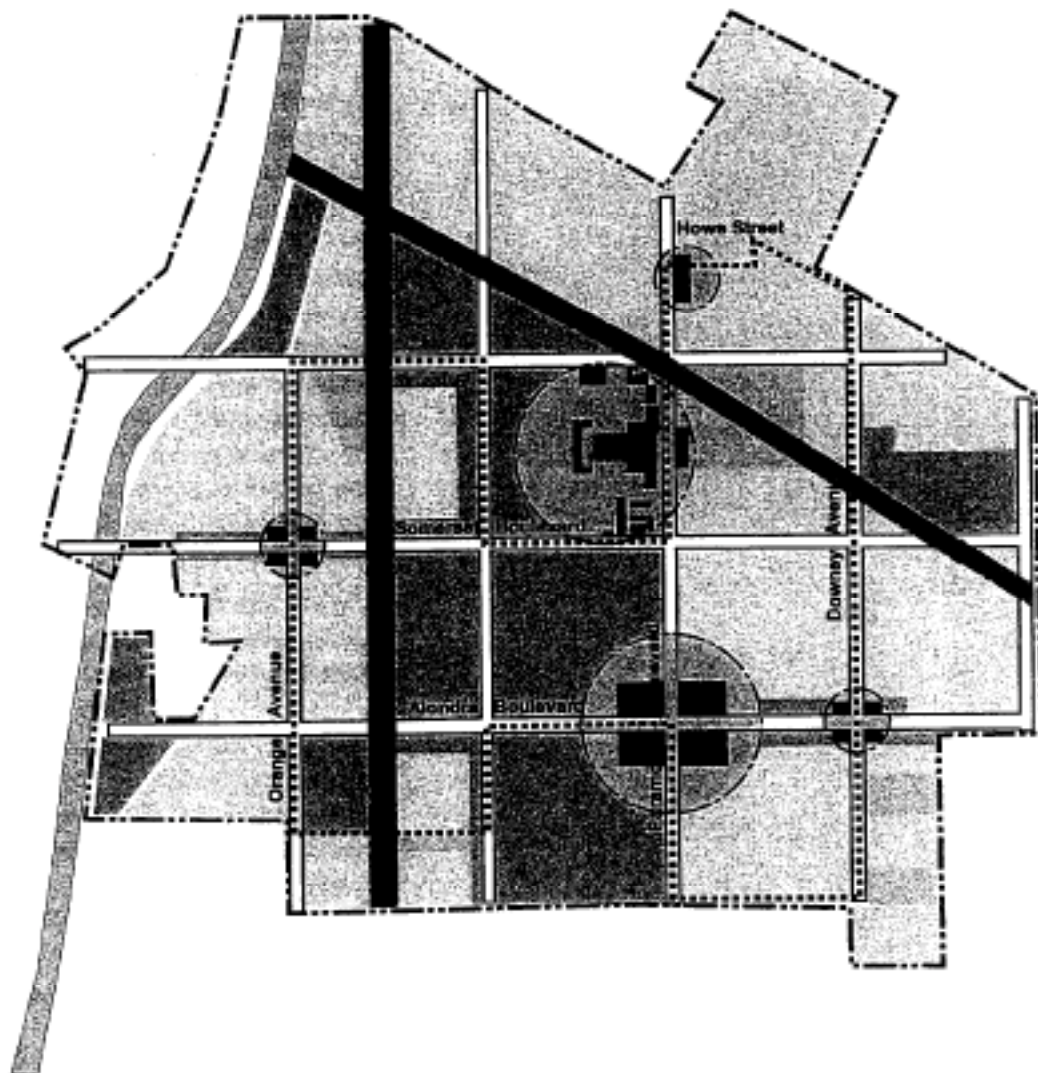
Residential/Commercial Node along Paramount Boulevard, south of Howe Street.

- Transit hub links high-density residential development with CBD and New Town Center
- Cluster of community serving retail reduces sprawl and increases walkability while serving as local community gathering space

Residential/Commercial Node at the intersection of Alondra Boulevard and Downey Avenue.

- Transit hub serves high-density residential development, schools and city districts
- Commercial cluster serves local neighborhood and provides focus for retail development

\* Transit Route



# District Structure



## STREET IMPROVEMENTS

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- *Continue to improve the streetscape environment to create a safe and pleasing pedestrian environment through sidewalks and street trees.*
- *Utilize street treatments to reinforce the character of Paramount's districts, the links between them, and the boundaries that separate them.*

As portions of the City transition from industrial use, the street types that formerly served them must be deliberately transformed to support and promote new types of desired development. A clearly defined hierarchy of street types will serve a number of purposes. First, it will help to bind together the district fabric by creating strong connections between the different areas of the city. Second, it will serve to create healthy, thriving district interiors by providing circulation routes that are appropriately matched to the various parts of the those districts. Third, street hierarchy can be used to provide buffer zones between districts or incompatible adjacent land uses. Fourth, a well-integrated street system will provide a logical structure on which to organize both local and regional transit systems. Finally, it will maximize the potential value of each land parcel by creating a streetscape environment that is appropriately matched to the development type.

Paramount's current streetscape improvement program has been a tremendous success along the City's thoroughfares. With the guide of a clearly defined district system, this program should be continued and expanded to include streetscape improvements to the interior streets of the City's districts and district centers. Streetscape improvement strategies should also be matched with development policies that require commercial development front the street and not be isolated by large expanses of parking. One of the goals of streetscape improvements should be to strengthen connections between city districts. Barriers such as rail corridors, industrial facades and highways present obstacles to walkability and accessible transit. Pedestrian and bikeway links across utility easements and railway rights-of-way (where possible) will increase connectivity within the currently fragmented city fabric.

The street treatment given to Paramount's roadways should reflect their hierarchy and character. Major truck routes like Garfield Avenue should receive enhanced streetscape treatment that buffer adjacent land uses, especially where they border residential or mixed-use districts. Distinctive streetscape treatments should emphasize pedestrian thoroughfares, particularly those leading to new transit nodes and the central business district.

## NEW DISTRICT CENTER

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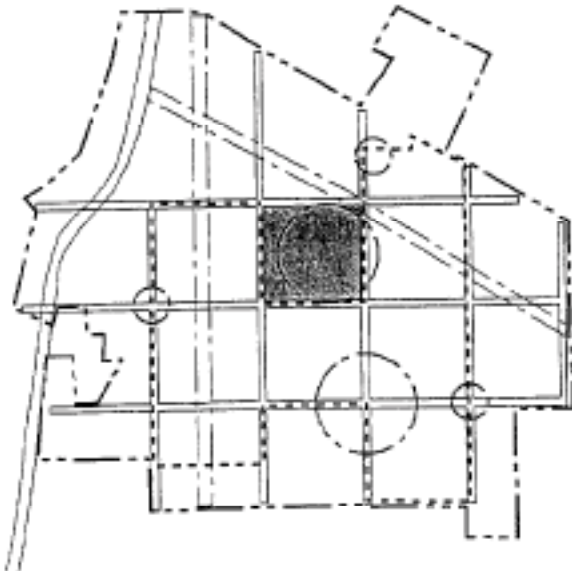
- *Using the activity generated by the high school, movie theater and church, redevelop the underutilized industrial land and parking areas at the current swap meet location to create a new district center.*

It is often the most effective to begin the redevelopment of a transforming area by focusing public resources on the creation of an identifiable and appealing district center. This is particularly effective if the new center can make use of existing features that are already drawing substantial numbers of people. Further redevelopment can take its cue from what is occurring at the center, and draw upon its energy to expand outwards.

The area bounded by Rosecrans Avenue to the north, Somerset Avenue to the south, Paramount Boulevard to the east and Garfield Avenue to the west is an area in transition. This area (approximately 150 acres) falls within an easy 10-minute walk, roughly a quarter-mile walking radius, from its center. In addition to the two brownfields in this area (mentioned in the existing conditions above), there are large areas of parking that are underutilized. As a result of the fact that the Paramount Swap Meet is thriving with activity, the land on which it is located has a much higher potential value. Together, these sites have the potential to be developed as the heart of a new district center that creates a model structure for transitional development in other parts of the city, as well as the Gateway Cities region as a whole.

This case study presents two alternatives that demonstrate how the area centered near the current location of the Paramount Swap Meet (which is located in a portion of the city already experiencing transitions in land use) can be turned into a new district center. Both proposals show how a mixed-use district would incorporate the land use demands identified in the existing conditions portion of the case study to create a dynamic new district that can act as a model for future areas of transition in the city. The result is a walkable neighborhood that integrates workplace, residential, open space and various retail types into an active district that serves both the district residents and the city as a whole.

In both alternatives, the new district center would capitalize on the existing activity in the area generated by the high school, the nearby Catholic Church, and the movie theater. The rail corridor that bisects the area would require at least one new rail crossing in the center of the district. The crossing would provide a location for an east-west parkway activating the central area of the new district.



*District Improvement Area, showing New District Center.*

Within the new district, land uses would be organized along road corridors with compatible streetscape design characters. The internal street hierarchy of the district would serve to activate and organize the district while maintaining a quiet residential character in areas dominated by housing. A system of civic open spaces would be distributed throughout the district, providing areas for community activities, special events and day-to-day interaction between neighbors. The open space system would also reinforce the pedestrian character of the district, providing spatial variety to the urban street environment.

Farther out from the central core, a variety of work place areas, commercial zones and residential areas would be located according to what is compatible with adjacent land uses. The activity center of the movie theater and existing auto-oriented commercial at the corner of Rosecrans Avenue and Paramount Boulevard would be further developed as a city-wide and regional destination and Garfield Avenue would be lined with uses that are compatible with its role as a truck route.

## strict Redevelopment

### New District Center

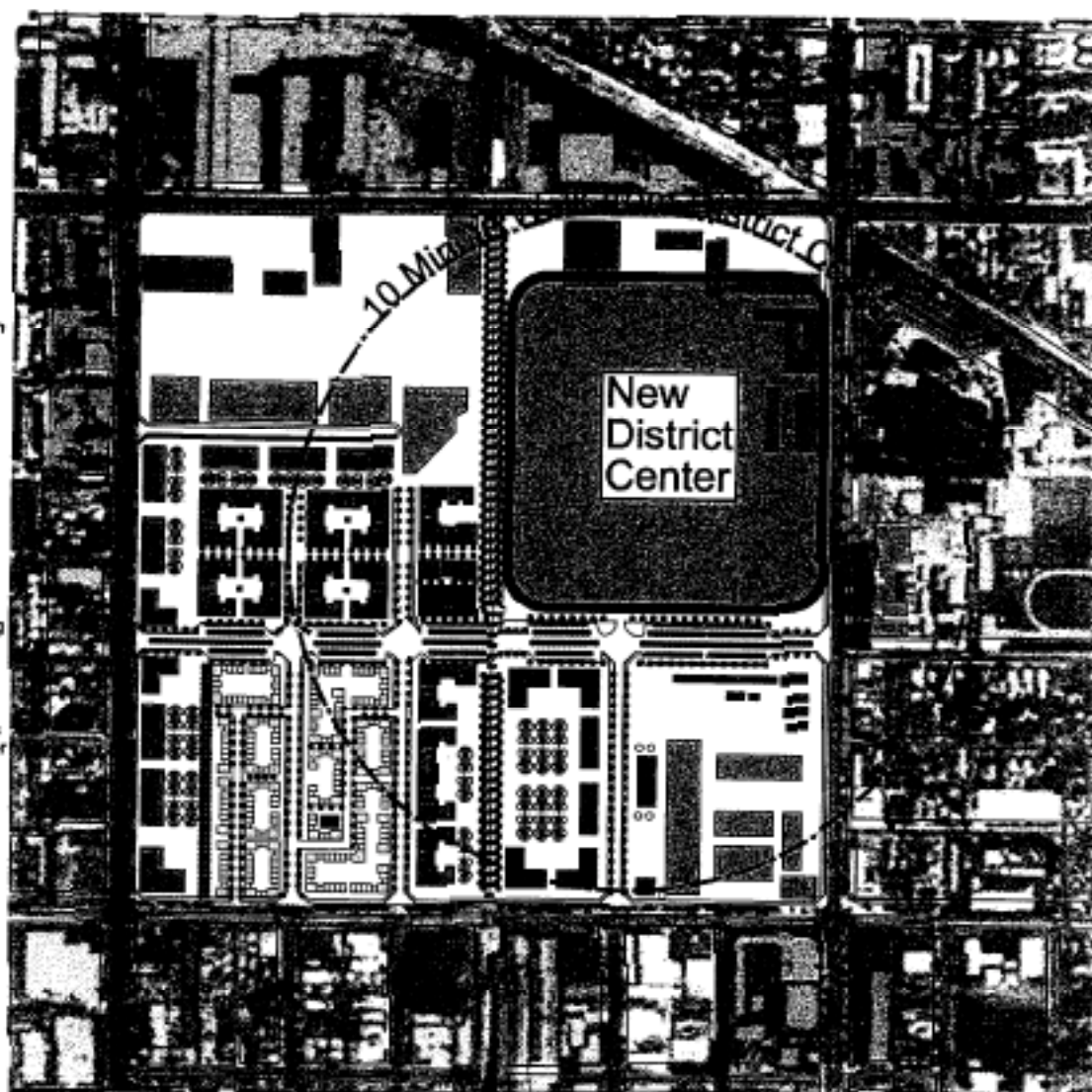
Proposed streets create pedestrian-friendly urban fabric out of formerly industrial superblocks.

- Proposed east-west "boulevard" connects residential and commercial uses west of Garfield Avenue with New District Center
- Residential streets provide human scale environment within walking distance of New District Center and Paramount High School

Warehouse and distribution centers are established on Garfield Avenue the city's primary truck route where they have direct access to major highways.

Live-work and high density residential development serve to transition from light industry and warehouse to the New District Center while restructuring the district as a walkable and pedestrian friendly environment

Business Park development west of Somerset Business Park reinforces street environment, serves as a buffer to the railway, and has excellent access to the New District Center and associated transit and retail



### New District



## District Revitalization Plan

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## CONCEPT ALTERNATIVE ONE

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Concept alternative one demonstrates how the new district center can function as a new activity hub, one that complements the CBD and adds new structure to appeal to those who occupy this changing portion of the City. This alternative capitalizes on the swap meet as an underutilized site and creates a dynamic urban core where the diverse clustering of land uses results in an active, pedestrian oriented, civic center. The central area would be organized around a large civic space that extends to Paramount Boulevard, flanked by local serving retail uses. The central retail core would serve a mix of housing types that would surround it within comfortable walking distance. Carefully grouping retail functions would allow for shared parking solutions, minimize the negative impact of sprawl style retail development and encourage the use of mass transit.

## istrict Redevelopment

### v District Center

Public plaza opposite the Paramount highschool is flanked with new retail and serves as gathering space and transit hub

Formal green space provides relief from street environment and organizing element for swap meet

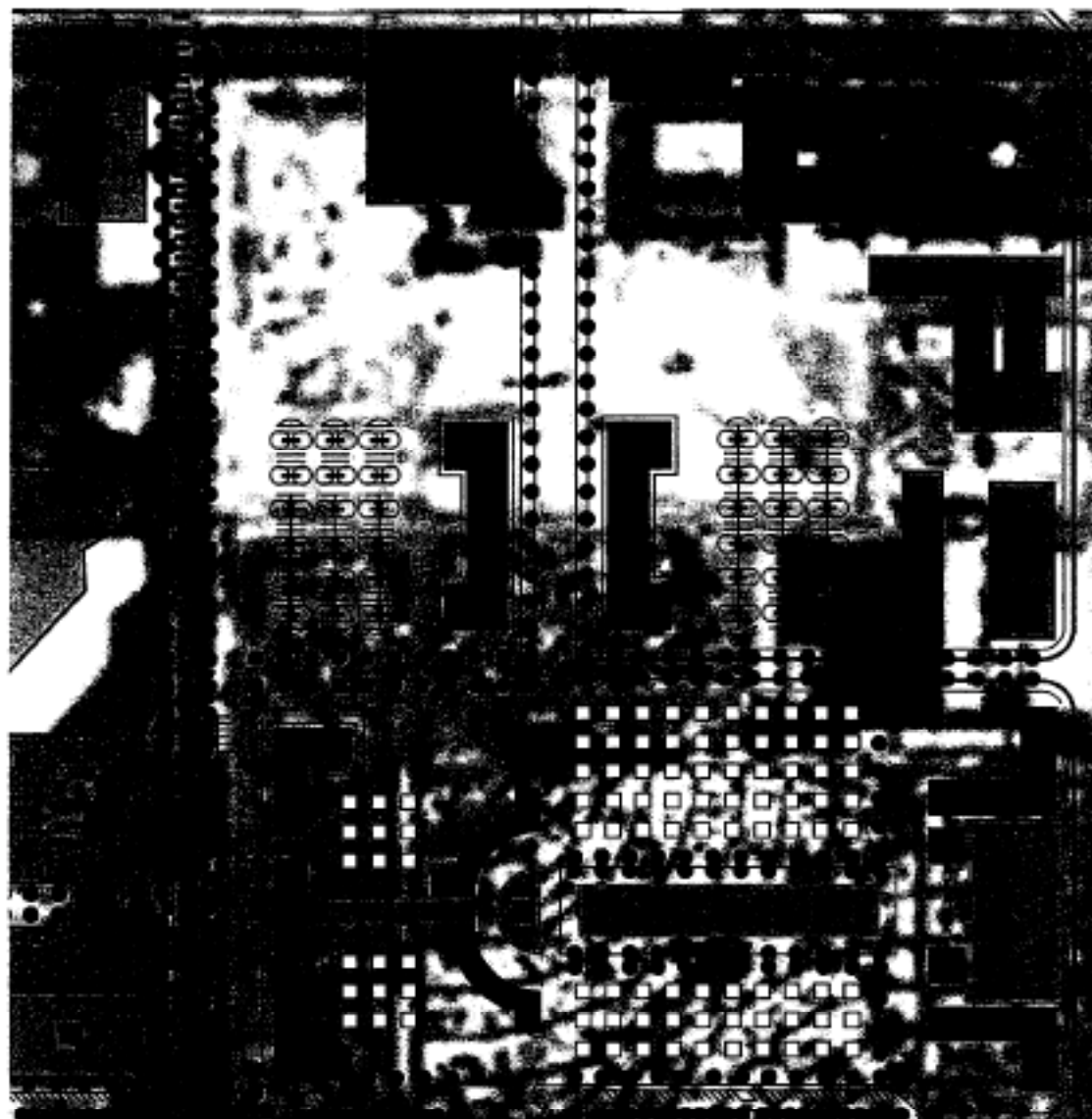
Crescent fountain serves as focal point and visual link to theater and retail to the north, and business park development to the south

Direct access to and from Paramount Boulevard creates public space as an extension of existing civic and commercial uses

posed streets create pedestrian-  
idly urban fabric out of formerly  
istral superblocks.

New streets within the retail district  
serve to enhance circulation and  
access to new development

Streets and alleys connect provide  
visual link between existing retail  
and business development, and  
be new activity hub



New District Center



## “New District Center” Concept 1

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## CONCEPT ALTERNATIVE TWO

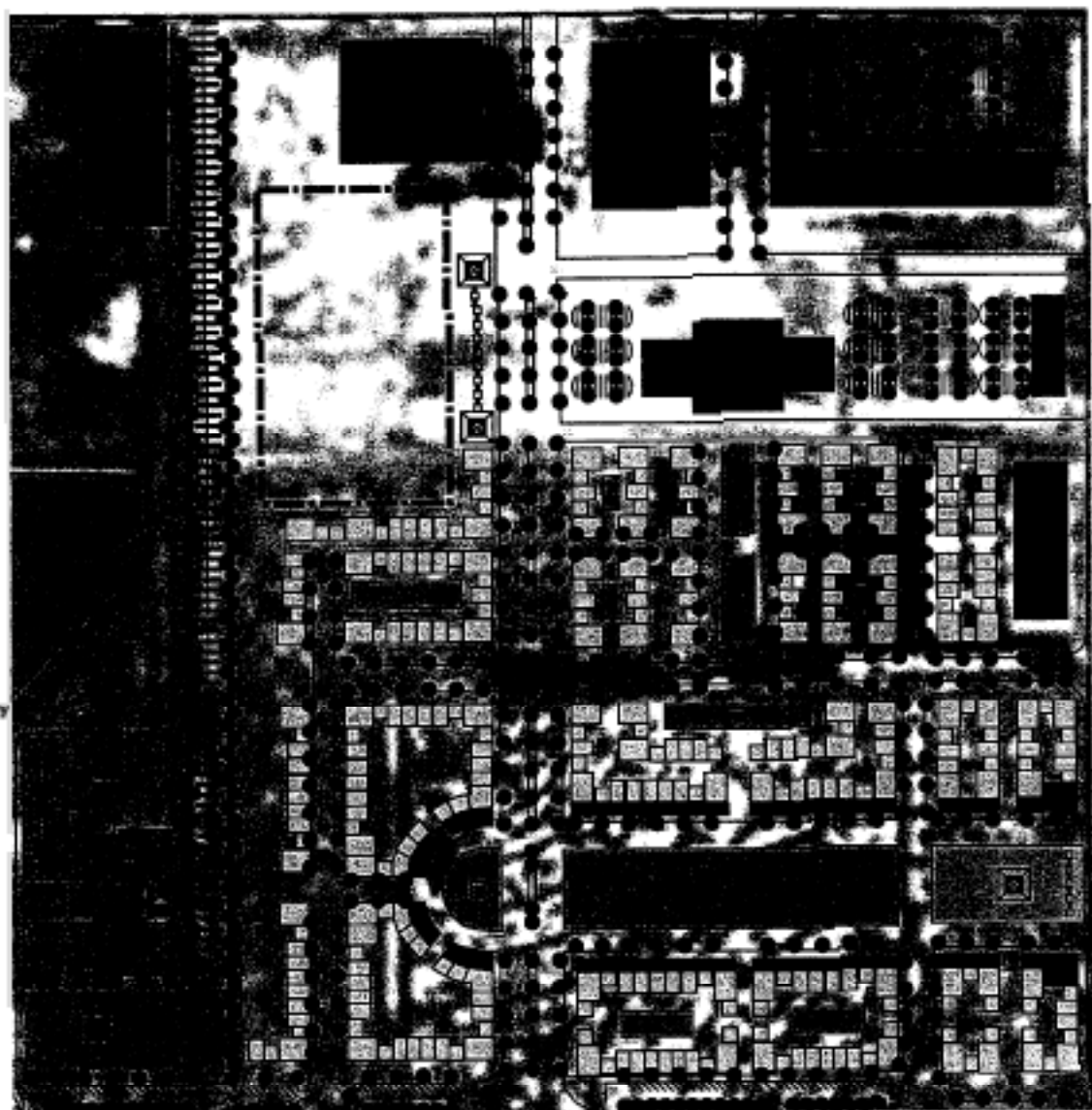
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Concept alternative two demonstrates how the swap meet, as an existing activity center, can be upgraded and utilized as the core of a new commercial district center. The plan preserves the highly successful swap meet while still creating a transit oriented mixed-use district structure that can accommodate future infill as development demands raise land values and underutilized sites continue to transition.

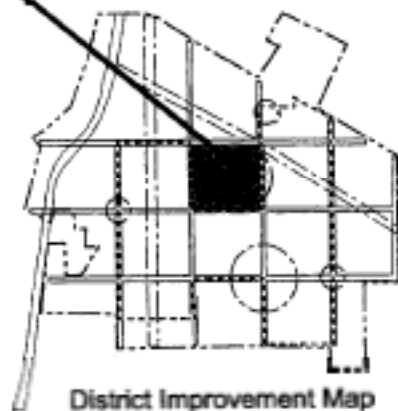
## District Redevelopment

### New District Center

- Public plaza on Paramount Boulevard across from the high school serves as transit hub and gateway to the new district center
- Formal "town square" is flanked by residential development with retail shops along the ground floor.
- Centrally located green space provides walkable environment for retail core as well as relief from auto-oriented streets
- New regional retail complements retail at Rosecrans as well as the movie theater, establishing a new District Center while accommodating the strip meet in a new location southwest of the theater
- 2 High-density residential housing is established along walkable neighborhood streets
- Walkable streets lead to the "townsquare" retail district, as well as to new regional retail and entertainment to the north
- Residential development is walking distance from the high school and transit hub, thus reducing dependency on automobiles
- 3 Proposed streets create pedestrian-friendly urban fabric out of formerly industrial superblocks.
- A series of open green spaces throughout the district serve as community gathering spaces, parks, and civic spaces
- Proposed east-west "boulevard" connects residential and commercial uses along Garfield Avenue with New District Center
- Residential streets provide human scale environment within walking distance of New District Center and Paramount High School



New District Center



## 'New District Center' Concept 2

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